

## FATHERS AND CHILDREN

**“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” (Mal 4:5-6)**

These prophetic words are found at the very end of the Old Testament Scriptures and obviously were fulfilled in the life and ministry of John the Baptist. When the angel, Gabriel, told Zechariah about the birth of John he said: “And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous-- to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17)

It is significant to note that healing the eternal breach between the old and the young was to prepare for the coming of Christ and prevent God from striking the land with a curse.

Certainly, in Christ, we need to put up with, endure, and forbear one another (Col. 3;13). This is, of course, not only deals with the great gulf between the old and the young, but also the inevitable tensions between various races, nationalities, and social groups. Since love does not insist on having its own way the Body of Christ must be a mosaic of differing preferences. We live in different kinds of houses, enjoy different kinds of food, different kinds of art, different kinds of music, etc. Our focus, for this lesson however, is on harmony between the old and the young. Old people must try to remember what it was like to be young, and young people must try to understand what it is like to be old. Turning the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, is obviously something God wants.

### A LESSON FROM REHOBOAM

There is, as you know, a great difference between trying to understand young people and giving them “carte blanche” control over the family, the church, or the nation. Common sense compels us to turn to experience when we search for wisdom.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, made a fundamental error in judgment when he rejected the counsel of his elders (1 Ki. 12:8), and listened to advisors his own age. It was their lack of wisdom and experience that brought death and division to the nation (see 1 Ki. 12:1 - 24). Even the U.S. Constitution requires the president to be at least 35 years of age. The famous 1960's admonition to "never trust anybody over 30" was almost an iron clad guarantee that the Hippie Movement would not have a long lasting and positive impact upon society.

### APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH

According to the CIA World Fact book, the population of our planet in July 06 was estimated to be 6,525,170,264. The break down by age was 0-14 years: 27.4%, 15-64 years: 65.2%, 65 years and over.7.4%. “Younger” folks comprise over 92% of all the people on earth. Most of them are growing up in an evolving environment to which the older folks cannot relate. The future holds even more computerized gadgets that will baffle the Senior Citizens and provide even more barriers between the fathers and their children.

It must be remembered, however, that Judgement Day will not reward those who have merely mastered the latest technology or whose resume includes the longest list of technological advances. Judgement Day will involve the consideration of the old fashioned moral conduct that God put in place before the world began. This is why Paul ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23);and told Titus to ordain elders in every city (Tit. 1:5). These men were not merely figure heads to avoid and evade, but spiritual leaders to whom the congregations were to obey. Please consider; **“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Heb 13:17)**

Paul put it like this: **“Honor your father and mother”-- which is the first commandment with a promise-- “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” (Eph 6:2-3)**